

FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION(S)

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Submitted by:_____

Finding:

Public agencies have proposed to reduce fuel hazards and restore forests on approximately 68,000 acres over the next 10 years at an estimated cost of approximately \$230 million. Sufficient funding sources have not been identified that can commit funds to increase capacity (staff, consultants, contractors) to plan and implement projects

In addition to public costs to reduce risks and restore forests will be private property owner costs to accomplish these measures on their own lands. This work on private lands will include creation of defensible space, including reduction of tree crown and basal area densities, around residences.

Background and Supporting Evidence:

The number of acres proposed for treatment will increase from approximately 2,100 acres to 7,000 acres annually. This will require an increase in capacity to plan, permit, and implement projects.

Funding currently pays for project implementation; however, it will not cover future planning, permitting, or monitoring costs.

Public funds have been used as an incentive to create defensible space around private residences. The average residential treatment averages approximately \$1,500, and there are approximately 40,000 residential units in the Basin, for a total cost of approximately \$60 million. Additional private owner costs will include replacing existing flammable building materials (such as wood shake roofs) with non-combustible and/or ignition resistant materials.

The Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act, White Pines County Lands Act (SNPLMA) funds will provide a source of federal funding; however, land sales in southern Nevada have proven insufficient to fully fund the 10-Year Fuels Reduction Strategy for the Lake Tahoe Basin. SNPMA funding is not intended to fully fund forest fuels reduction efforts in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

California will need to appropriate approximately \$30-40 million to treat its state owned lands. Every public dollar spent in Lake Tahoe reduces the availability of public funds for other areas.

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Recommendation(s)

1. Increase federal and state funding for land management agencies to increase their capacity to plan and permit projects as the number of acres treated increases.
2. The majority of all defensible space treatments should be funded by the private sector, which when combined would represent a \$40-\$60 million investment. Stipends have proven highly effective at motivating homeowners to create defensible space and should be considered.
3. The Governors should recognize the commitment to invest by the private sector and appropriate sufficient funding to staff and implement projects on state, municipal and privately owned lands.
4. Treatments on public lands should include removal of sufficient merchantable material to reduce the amount of public funding that is projected in the Lake Tahoe Basin. It should be noted that the currently timber has little to no value and will not pay for fuels reduction.

Impacts of Implementation:

Cost: The federal and state commitment will, in combination with SNPLMA, is estimated to be approximately \$24 million per year for 10 years. SNPLMA funding is estimated to be currently funding approximately \$8 million per year, leaving an estimated additional need of \$16 million per year. The private sector is contributing through the treatment of developed parcels. Currently private open land owners are contributing approximately 25% of the costs associated with treating the lands owned by homeowners associations and general improvement districts for a total of approximately \$1 million per year.

Funding Source: Public and private sources.

Staffing: Capacity will have to increase to provide sufficient capacity to implement the proposed projects in the time frame.

Existing regulations or laws: The California Public Resources Code Section 4291 requires residents to maintain defensible space. It also allows public agencies to cite and charge landowners that do not comply.